

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization Deliverable

This is what was found by SFSU URGE Pod at San Francisco State University on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**

We gathered information through two mechanisms. We collected information on three research projects that included meaningful interactions with local communities of color through connections of URGE pod members. In addition, we developed an anonymous survey that was sent to department chairs in the College of Science & Engineering at SFSU, who were asked to forward the survey to all faculty. We received 9 responses to the survey. The survey questions were:

1. In your research program, how many research projects were undertaken in countries or regions with communities of color?
2. How many of those included meaningful interactions with those communities of color?
3. If your answer above was zero, please describe what you think may have prevented you from meaningfully engaging communities of color in your research.
4. Briefly describe one or more example projects to provide context for the following questions.
5. What worked well in these interactions?
6. What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?
7. Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
8. Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?

Of the 9 survey respondents, 6 indicated that they had no projects that were in countries or regions with communities of color. The reasons given included their work did not include community research, cost barriers and access through existing networks, or no reason at all.

The research programs we did learn about included a research project that included collaboration with a scientist from the Tolowa Dee'Ni Nation as a co-PI and paid research assistants from the tribe as well. The proposal was presented to the tribal council for review and approval, and the council reviewed and contributed edits for the final report that was submitted.



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Two projects were two one-day workshops, one current and one recently finished in which youth from local community of color—a low-lying area vulnerable to sea level rise—were invited to the university's marine and estuarine research labs to learn about sea level rise adaptation.

The final two projects included a mountain meadows project in Maidu land working with the Mountain Maidu Consortium, and post-restoration assessment in meadows.

- **What worked well in these interactions?**

The interactions that worked well were developed on mutual respect and listening and learning from one another. One project involved a restoration project based on relationships to the land and cultural traditions. Another PI emphasized the importance of learning from each other. The PI learned local and traditional ecological knowledge during field work together, when they reviewed the results, drafted the report content, and through the questions they were asked by the tribal council. The SFSU team was also able to teach their tribal collaborators about western ecological survey methods. Other science collaborators also developed improved respect and appreciation for working with the tribal communities.

PI's also stated the importance of funding in facilitating interactions. These were used for interpreters at events and translation of written amteirals, in addition to transportation and other project costs.

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**

PI's stated that deeper integration than sharing goals and knowledge was challenging, and seemed to be limited by existing structures and language. One PI stated that they could have done better in co-designing the approach to the ecological study. The university scientists had more time and resources to devote to the project than the tribal scientists, as it was part of their regular duties to work on research projects. The tight deadlines and limited funding meant they did not have time to confer together as much as they would have liked. In the beginning there was also some lack of respect for our tribal partners and the concept of tribal engagement among some of the university scientists on the project. Thankfully this improved quickly over the initial phases of cross training in the field.



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- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**

The most common thread among the PI feedback was the need for more funding. Funding could be used to support the time and effort of tribal members to do this work. Scholarship opportunities for tribal students would make it easier to integrate students more deeply into the project.

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**

Feedback from PI's indicate more support support and recognition for collaborative development of community engaged science proposals and the co-creation of knowledge is needed (i.e. more funding for this kind of work). One PI gave examples of specific organizations that helped facilitate connections, particularly with tribal students and scientists. Getting more funding to groups like these makes them less likely to feel overwhelmed by request, i.e., if they are well supported they are more able to be open to opportunities because the framework is already in place.